

Message Text

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SUBJECT: EDITORIAL IN THE IRISH TIMES JUNE 29,1978

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN THE IRISH TIMES, JUNE
29, 1978 UNDER THE HEADING BATTLE-SCENES.

RELIABLE NEWS OF EVENTS IN INDO-CHINA IS A RARE
COMMODITY. THERE ARE FEW FOREIGN VISITORS OF ANY
KIND, INCLUDING POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS. REFUGEES'
STORIES TEND, NATURALLY, TO BE PERSONAL RATHER THAN
GENERAL. MONITORED BROADCASTS ARE APT TO DEAL EITHER
IN SENSATIONALISM OR PROPAGANDA. THUS, TUESDAY NIGHT'S
REPORT, INITIALLY IN A "VOICE OF AMERICA" BULLETIN,
THAT VIETNAM HAD MOUNTED A MAJOR OFFENSIVE AGAINST
CAMBODIA HAD BEEN MET WITH CAUTION. YESTERDAY THE
U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT DECLINED TO CONFIRM THAT
FIGHTING ON THAT SCALE DESCRIBED BY THE BROADCAST WAS
IN PROGRESS-INVOLVING SOME 70,000 TO 80,000 VIETNAMESE
TROOPS, SUPPORTED BY TANKS AND AIRCRAFT.

EVEN IF SUCH AN OPERATION IS IN PROGRESS, HOWEVER, IT IS
UNLIKELY TO BE INTENDED AS A TAKEOVER BID-IN OTHER WORDS,
THE OUTRIGHT, CONQUEST OF CAMBODIA.

THE WHOLESALE OCCUPATION OF CAMBODIA WOULD BE A THANKLESS
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AND UNREWARDING TASK FOR ANY FOREIGN ARMY, AS THE
VIETNAMESE WELL KNOW. THE FANATICISM OF THE PHNOM
PENHREGIME IS NOT A MATTER FOR DISPUTE: IT IS ONE
FACT ABOUT CONTEMPORARY INDO-CHINA WHICHIS ACCEPTED BY
EVERYBODY. THE AUTHORITARIANISM OF THE LEADERSHIP
IS EXCEPTIONALLY RUTHLESS, EVEN IN THE CONTEXT OF A
VICTORIOUS REVOLUTION; AND THE DEGREE OF AUSTERITY

VISITED UPON THE PEOPLE IS MERCILESS.

RELATIONS BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA, OF COURSE, MUST BE INTERPRETED IN TERMS OF THE LONG-RUNNING RIVALRY OF THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA. CHINA SEES CAMBODIA AS ITS ONLY ALLY IN INDO-CHINA, AND CLAIMS THAT VIETNAM HAS MOVED INTO THE RUSSIAN SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT MOSCOW HAS SUPPORTED HANOI WITH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID, THE VIETNAMESE ARE NOT ANXIOUS TO BE COMMITTED TO ANY ALLIANCE THAT COULD BECOME OPPRESSIVE.

IT IS OF INTEREST THAT A GROUP OF U.S. BUSINESSMEN, ON THEIR RETURN FROM AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO HANOI, REPORT THE IMPATIENCE OF THE VIETNAMESE TO SEE AN END TO THE AMERICAN EMBARGO SO THAT TRADE MAY START RUNNING AGAIN- AND RUNNING STRONGLY. HANOI TOLD ITS VISITORS THAT POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC "NORMALISATION" OF THE AMERICAN- VIETNAMESE RELATIONSHIP IS LESS IMMEDIATELY IMPORTANT TO THAN THE RESUMPTION OF BUSINESS AND COMMERCE WITH THE UNITED STATES-A CLEAR REFLECTION OF A PRAGMATIC SENSE OF VALUES.

HANOI ALSO HAS SHOWN SIGNS THAT IT DOES NOT WANT TO CARRY ON A FEUD WITH PEKING, THE LATEST EXPRESSION OF WHICH IS THE ROW OVER VIETNAM'S ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT
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OF ITS ETHNIC CHINESE MINORITY. IT HAS REPEATEDLY ASKED PEKING TO NEGOTIATE ON THE PROBLEM, AND HAS BEEN TURNED DOWN. ONLY THIS WEEK IT HAS RENEWED THE APPEAL FOR TALKS. THERE IS NO VISIBLE REASON WHY THE CHINESE SHOULD NOT ACCEPT, UNLESS THEY REGARD HARASSMENT OF VIETNAM AS AN ELEMENT OF THEIR ANTI-SOVIET STRATEGY IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA.

...IF PEKING AND MOSCOW BOTH WERE WILLING TO DECLARE INDO-CHINA A NO-MAN'S LAND, MUCH OF THE TENSION WOULD BE DISPERSED, INCLUDING THE BORDER WAR BETWEEN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. ALAS, THAT LOOKS LIKE A VAIN HOPE.

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